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COMPULSORY ISOLATIONISM

by Felix Morley

The British decision to embargo private purchases from the United States, and to develop barter treaties outside the dollar area, on the Nazi pattern, is bitterly ironical. After subjection to an intense and protracted campaign asserting the heinous character of "isolationism", the American people suddenly find themselves more isolated than ever before. They can no longer even sell their goods freely to British colonies lying just off the American coast.

This shocking development comes at a time when it is increasingly obvious that not a single objective of our foreign policy during the past four years has been attained. The whole grandiose structure has simply collapsed; with officials of the Department of State reduced to a frantic scrabbling amid the ruins. An instance was when Secretary Acheson recently said, off the record, that unless we toss $150,000,000 more to Southern Korea, it will go Communist "in two or three months".

So it is not surprising that disillusionment is increasingly apparent -- from Maine to California. The Atlantic Charter seems a sardonic memory. The Reciprocal Trade Agreements program sounds like a bad joke. There is no faith in the United Nations; no confidence in the Marshall Plan; no enthusiasm for the North Atlantic Treaty and rather less than no trust in the pending Military Assistance Program.

Indeed it is possible to believe that the long-suffering taxpayer is at last about to turn, at least sufficiently to repudiate this latest political panacea of arming Western Europe, along with "Point Four" as the Administration's latest economic nostrum.

It will be extremely significant if British policy, rather than that of Soviet Russia, serves to bring the American people to their senses. For while everyone knows that Communism and Capitalism will not mix, we have somehow been sold on the idea that British and American interests are inseparable and, in all fundamentals, identical.

This assumption is now being refuted by the British themselves. What they have done is merely to demonstrate that in an emergency self-preservation is the first law of nature. But there is also almost an element of contempt in the British decision to increase imports of cereals from Soviet Russia, simultaneously with the imposition of a license system limiting export of American grains to British territory.

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The effrontery is sharpened by synchronizing this barter arrangement with the Senate debate on the North Atlantic Treaty. For Article 2 of this alliance, directed against Russia, says piously:

> "The Parties . . . will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them."

II

With the pathetic frustration of our post-war global planning there is now more than a little danger of a developing Anglophobia. We have seen how readily our commentators could turn from an actual deference toward "good old Joe" Stalin, to picturing him as Public Enemy Number One. A similar emotional volte face toward the present British Government is not at all impossible.

Therefore it should be emphasized that the British National Socialists, like the Russian Communists, have done nothing which could not easily have been foreseen by an intelligent officialdom in Washington. What HUMAN EVENTS has proved itself able to anticipate was certainly not too deeply veiled for the discernment of our presumably well-informed and certainly well-financed diplomacy.

The British Labor Government has now been in power for exactly four years -- since July 26, 1945. During that period it has moved steadily to restrict individual freedom, in order to make Britain a completely socialized State. There has been no deception and no concealment about this policy. On the contrary, the imaginary virtues of an essentially isolationist economy have been stridently proclaimed.

Moreover, for a full generation before the Socialists assumed power in Britain, they were preparing their present program and announcing it to the world. If Americans failed to realize their objectives, the present political leadership in London is certainly not at fault.

Finally, every careful student of British history must have realized that the dominant political theory in England, ever since the Norman Conquest, has been that of class government. There was no fundamental alteration in this theory when representatives of the wage earners achieved the political power which earlier had been wielded by feudal barons, by Court and Established Church, by great landlords or -- in time -- by the rising manufacturing class. No new principle, of European Federation or more effective international co-operation, was established when the representatives of organized labor began to change Great Britain into a National Socialist State. The underlying theory of British government is still wholly alien to that of our Constitution.

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In 1776, Americans could see that all human interests -- economic, social and spiritual -- are opposed to the theory of centralized class government. So they declared, fought for and established the independence of this Federal Republic. But, in 1949, Americans are far less familiar with their traditions, and far less aware of the practical value of these traditions, than they used to be. For all the current talk of freedom, Americans today reveal in many ways that they actually welcome the encroachments of a paternalistic governmental elite.

III

Over a century ago that shrewd and sympathetic observer of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville, remarked:

> "I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America. . . . The majority lives in the perpetual utterance of self-applause, and there are certain truths which the Americans can learn only from strangers or from experience."

That governments are constituted to conserve, rather than to squander, the human and material resources entrusted to their protection would seem to be one of these truths. But we have come to believe that governmental dissipation of wealth is somehow admirable. Now, both from experience and from strangers, we shall perhaps relearn some political fundamentals.

First the Russians and now the British have told us, in so many words, that our feverish effort to discard something stigmatized as "isolationism" was, in their eyes, ridiculous. First Moscow and then London have informed us that from now on we can restrict our trading to the dollar area, whether we like it or not. The official "aim" is still "a pattern of world trade in which the dollar and non-dollar countries can operate together within one single multilateral system". But the actual practice has no relation to the asserted aim.

If there is a continuation of this "disequilibrium" -- as the British Treasury euphemistically describes it -- then our editorial writers will soon have to revamp their use of words, so that "isolationist" is no longer employed as an epithet. For years the practice has been to use the term in derision of those who think that the United States can do little for mankind unless it keeps its own inheritance bright. Now London politely says that the net result of our globaloney is "aggravation of deep-seated maladjustments".

When asked to be specific on the evils of "isolationism" the standard reply has been that the world has shrunk with the progress of

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science and invention. That is of course true, but because one may now travel to Europe overnight it does not follow that the American people should scrap their whole theory of government, to adopt the patterns of European Socialism. Having done so much in this direction, it is disconcerting to be told by Sir Stafford Cripps that the effort was futile.

IV

There is nothing obscure about the distinctive American contribution to political thought.

It is found in the essentially Christian belief that the individual is naturally honorable, and Caesar (or the State) naturally tyrannical. To prevent subjection of the individual by the State, the powers of the latter should therefore always be balanced and circumscribed. The responsibility of the citizen -- who with us is not a subject -- is to show himself worthy of this idealistic system. In the memorable words of James Madison, we "rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government".

This virtue of self-government has been highly developed by the American people, and is still strong at the grass roots throughout the entire nation. Yet, for some strange reason, it has become fashionable to argue that men can no longer govern themselves -- that they need the "controls" of an all-powerful national, or even international, bureaucracy. Logically, it would seem that as the world shrinks in terms of communication its localities need more rather than less protection against the concentrated governmental tyranny which science makes both more probable, and more terrible.

Now, as the result of continuous frustration, two conclusions are forced upon us. One is that our political system is simply not designed to produce supermen in the field of world planning. The blunders of our officials have been so grotesque that we cannot fairly hold them personally responsible. They have been trying to do what our system of government makes impossible.

The second conclusion, currently rammed home by the British planners, is that other governments have no intention of scrapping their political philosophy, merely because we have lost faith in our own. Whenever our "internationalism" comes up against Russian or British isolationism, it is the latter which wins out.

In short, the alien philosophies we seek to adopt are bringing us nothing but domestic confusion and foreign contempt. But we may learn, as de Tocqueville said, from strangers and from experience.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VI, No. 28

JUL 19 1949

By Frank C. Hanighen July 13, 1949

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CRISIS: During the past week key Members of Congress have examined curiously a number of gaudy plans for solving the international financial crisis. One, reportedly from the British, suggests a stabilization loan, supported by "Ft. Knox gold", to maintain the present level of the pound, and the Executive would make the loan by fiat. But Senators said the Executive couldn't do so without legislation, and anyway the plan is unsound. Another rosy dream emanated from Left Wing Fair Dealers. Under this scheme, the U.S. would take over the $14 billion worth of blocked sterling assets sitting uselessly in various foreign countries and pay off those nations in dollars. The notion, like most of the Fair Dealers' ideas, has a brilliant sales point -- the $14 billion would presumably be converted into orders for American industry, thereby solving the recession problem. But who -- asked Congressmen -- would pay for the transfer of $14 billion? And so this plan met with skepticism. Congress was content to leave the matter of international finance in the capable hands of Secretary Snyder.

In this connection, one question is repeatedly raised: What sense is there to the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act now that Britain is shutting off imports of U.S. goods? These agreements will soon be debated in the Senate and this as well as other objections will be raised. We heard of one private gathering last week, assembled to lay plans for protesting the Trade Act; both union and employer representatives were present. Also, we learn that certain steel companies are writing their Members of Congress saying that foreign steel is now entering the country in increasing amounts and asking for tariff protection. Today it seems likely that the "peril-point" provision (which the Administration opposes) will remain in the Act.

The cry is raised that we have been wasting our money supporting British Socialism and this British experiment has failed. Immediately, Leftists answer that British Socialism has suffered because the United Kingdom must import more than it exports. As if the British economy hadn't prospered on this basis for a century! A reasonable observer might remark that when the failure of Russian Socialism was evident, Socialists retorted that Russia unfortunately was not industrialized and had no experienece in representative government. They can hardly say this about the Mother of Parliaments and of the Industrial Revolution. The next thing we may expect will be a Trotskyist rebuttal -- that Socialism cannot be a success in only one or two countries, that all the world must be Socialist. This debate will undoubtedly swell and will prove instructive -- provided that Americans realize that the American Fair Deal is "crypto-Socialism".

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CHAMBERS: We wish to pay tribute to one Whittaker Chambers. The savage cross-examination of this extraordinary figure in the Hiss trial must have been a veritable torture. If ever a man suffered for his past sins, and publicly, it was Whittaker Chambers. It is time to recognize that he displayed great self-sacrifice and noble adherence, however belated, to the principles of Americanism, which above all demand individual courage.

On Friday, July 7, while the jury was deliberating, the Washington Daily News printed an interview with Chambers, written by Nicholas Blatchford, which stirred no little interest in the capital. "I am a man", said Chambers to the News, "very reluctantly and grudgingly, step by step, destroying myself so that this nation and the faith by which it lives may continue to exist. It is not a role I would

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have chosen for myself. I am merely doing the job as I see it. I have a task to do and I am going about it in my own crude way. Someone, some way, had to come along and lift off the lid. Someone had to say: 'This is what is inside.'

"This is a tremendous case", he went on. "It involves the basic issues of our times. Unfortunately, it has become a clash of personalities. We are all in this historical dilemma -- all of us. But no one has gotten to the roots of the question. A religious age would have no difficulty at all in understanding this story. The story is how -- why -- men become Communists, why they continue to be Communists and why some break and some go on." It is too bad that judicial ruling in the recent Hiss case prevented Chambers from stating this apologia on the witness stand.

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KAUFMAN AFFAIR: As foreshadowed in this column last week, a flood of public criticism has deluged Judge Kaufman, for his conduct in the Hiss trial. As the controversy rages over this matter, it is becoming more likely that Kaufman will not preside again in this case, and already names of a new presiding judge are proposed. One of these is that of Federal Judge W. C. Chesnut of Baltimore. We recall that he was appointed, a decade ago, as special judge in the New York trial of Judge Manton, accused of bribe-taking. Chesnut is a man of high character, impartiality and judicial experience. But, while there are calls for a new judge, there are none for a new prosecutor. It is generally agreed that Mr. Murphy showed good court strategy and made an excellent summation. He will undoubtedly again prosecute this case.

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PLAIN MEN: The seven men and one woman on the Hiss case jury who voted for conviction may illustrate a thesis which has long tantalized us. It is that plain men -- business men, farmers, workers -- are instinctively sounder in their recognition of a real fifth column in this country than is the intelligentsia. Mr. C. P. Ives, in his column in the Baltimore Sun (July 4) applies this idea to the growing movement to exclude Communists from the teaching profession. Mr. Ives says that "the present active movement against what eminent academicians now agree was always a threat to academic freedom did not start in the academic groves at all. It did not start even in the great privately endowed institutions of our part of the country with their proud tradition of educational leadership. It started among the plain and simple men who represent other plain and simple men in the Federal and state legislatures.

"Yet", goes on Mr. Ives, "it has long been a major worry among thoughtful men that so many sophisticated people were apt to feel somewhat contemptuous toward the representative branch of Government. In Federal affairs these people almost always sided with the Executive in his rows with Congress. And never more passionately than when the Executive denied the Communist infiltration into the Executive branch which Congress has charged steadily from the days of Martin Dies to those of Judith Coplon. . . . But if it is to work anywhere, popular government, which is to say, legislative government, must work on the large and elemental issues which involve its own continuance and the survival of freedom. Here the evidence shows everywhere and with always mounting massiveness that the plain men have understood the necessities of freedom, including academic freedom, better than the sophisticates. . . . That is something for American patriots to cheer about in this thirty-second year of the Russian revolution and the one hundred seventy-fourth of ours."

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McCLOY: John J. McCloy, High Commissioner to Germany, has commenced his task auspiciously. The Overseas News Agency, an organization never noted for its warmth of friendship toward the German people, reports with apparent alarm that McCloy has actually started out by trying to make friends with the Germans. The Agency refer-

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ring to his first tour through the country reported, "it is as much a 'good-will' trip as an inspection trip, U.S. officials admitted [emphasis ours] today". But the ONA notes other disturbing developments. It says that McCloy is "mixing with German leaders and showing personal friendliness of a kind in which General Clay never indulged [emphasis ours]". A military friend, who has had intimate knowledge of the Clay administration writes us: "Clay never met any Germans whatsoever if he could avoid doing so, and when he couldn't avoid it, treated them with silent, or even in some cases open discourtesy." Our friend gives quite a different picture of McCloy: "The new High Commissioner is a kindly man; he is courteous; and he has an unbounded curiosity about all things German."

Those who talked with McCloy in Washington before his trip across the Atlantic say that while he would like to stop the dismantling of the rest of the German plants on the "death list", he felt he could not run counter to the agreements made earlier by the State Department with Britain and France. There is a possibility, however, that McCloy is already learning that the carrying out of what is said to be the final batch of dismantling projects is having a bad effect not only on the economy but on the morale of the people. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear a report that the Allied authorities have postponed for several months the decision to dismantle the Deutsche Edelstahlwerke in Bochum. Is this due to McCloy? It may be so. Certainly, Berlin would feel the effects of this dismantling, and McCloy has already given special attention to that beleaguered city. The Bochum factory had been turning out special high-test steel castings for a power plant under construction in the Western sector of Berlin. And this power plant is being built in order to relieve the Western sectors of dependence, in electric power, on the big plant in the Eastern, Soviet-controlled zone. Without the castings from Bochum, the work on the plant would have to shut down. If McCloy did move to spare the Bochum factory, he may cancel other dismantlings.

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MacARTHUR AND JAPAN: General MacArthur may retire and return to the United States within the next six months, according to well-informed American officials just back from the Far East. The general is described as tired, and discouraged with the prospects in Japan. After V-J day and until recently, not only MacArthur but the United States enjoyed the respect and confidence of Japanese leaders. However, our handling of the Chinese situation and the final debacle have altered the attitude of these leaders, and perhaps also of many other Japanese. One of our informants who knows Japanese psychology well over many years pictures the Japanese as saying privately, "We can't put our trust in the United States. See how the Americans let Chiang down. From now on we must look out for ourselves."

Another disturbing factor is the rise of the Communist strength in Japan. Some 5,000 soldiers have recently been released by the Soviets from prison camps and returned to the homeland, thoroughly indoctrinated with Communist ideas. Although comparatively small in numbers, that group serves as a useful nucleus for a fifth column, and considered in conjunction with the Soviet threat from the nearby mainland does inspire uneasiness among American officials. The threat is not military, but economic. Soviet puppets on the mainland may soon offer to trade with Japan. If the ports of Dairen, Tsingtao and Shanghai were thrown open to Japanese goods, the economic situation on the islands would be enormously improved. And the worst of it is that the U.S. cannot offer Japan any such trade outlets. American officials know all too well that if trade between the mainland and Japan began, political kinship between the Chinese Communists and the Japanese would follow. Finally, our military experts are very pessimistic about Korea and cannot see how the Southern Korean anti-Communist Government can possibly survive. It is little wonder that MacArthur would like to throw the whole problem back into the laps of the Far Eastern Division of the State Department which has done so much to create it.

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Book Events

The Sorcerers, by Ludwig Kieve. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. $4.00.
Reviewed by Frank Chodorov.

To describe a novel as individualistic is, in a way, being redundant. For what else can a novel be but a story in which people of definite characteristics play out their parts? By the same token, there is no such thing as a socialistic novel. The essential doctrine of Socialism is the identification of the individual with his environment, which is predetermined for him by the prevailing economy. It is a denial of free will and, therefore, of inborn character. The perfect socialistic novel, if we follow the logic of that ideology, would be a story about automatons, hardly worth reading. It could have neither hero nor villain, since such characters presuppose the pull of indigenous impulses -- erroneous concepts of bourgeois psychology and morality. Individuality is a fiction, says Socialism, and hence the novel must be a fantasy.

What we call a socialistic novel is one in which the author uses the story as a podium for a discourse on the glories of collectivism or a tirade against capitalism. We have had any number of that kind in recent years. On the whole, they are dull reading, simply because the characters turn out to be megaphones for the authors. One wonders what they would write about if their utopia were realized; perhaps about their own disillusionment.

To repeat, all good novels must be individualistic, for they must recount the inevitable course of events when a set of characters, of given propensities, are thrown into a given situation. But, an author with a penchant for individualism can select for his canvas a story in which that philosophy comes in conflict with statist ideas. It would be natural for such an author to arouse sympathy for those characters that exemplify his point of view and to make the opposite kind less attractive. To carry conviction, however, the characters must talk for themselves, not the author, and the situations they find themselves in must not be created for the purpose of promoting a "cause", but must follow as a certainty from the inclinations of the cast. If the reader comes away from the book, on his own account and uninfluenced by preachments, with the impression that individualism is an irrepressible philosophy of life and that statism is an impossible fabrication, then we might call the novel individualistic.

A novel of that order is The Sorcerers (an unfortunate title), by Rudolph Kieve. It tells a story, appropriately enough for the purpose, of Germany during the years leading up to and through World War I. Official American propaganda has pretty well hidden the fact that some of the finest anti-statist thinking has come out of Germany, and has created the impression of a people entirely devoid of any sense of freedom. That, of course, is all poppycock. Mr. Kieve, whose realism gives evidence of personal experience, reminds us in this story that Germany was not free of the conflict between statism and individualism which has been disturbing the world.

The story is about an unlovely Prussian character, transplanted by circumstances to southern Germany, where he enters into a business partnership with a morbidly romantic Jew. The situations arising from the juxtaposition of these opposites, accentuated by an undercurrent of anti-Semitism, weave their way to an inevitable denouement. Dozens and dozens of characters, every one clearly delineated, make their contributions to the plot, so that we have a picture of a Society rather than a narrative of events. Despite an inclination toward cloying descriptions and occasional superfluity of metaphors and analogies, the story moves along with expedition. Interest never flags. And for readers who are surfeited with socialistic preaching or innuendo in their novels, this one will prove a welcome respite.

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